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ABSTRACT

Provides a comprehensive review of recent scholarship pertaining to leadership and community college presidents. Particular attention is paid to trait and behavioral theories of leadership. The trait theory asserts that the individual requires leadership traits as part of his or her personality and that the traits can be polished in order to be a successful community college leader. The behavioral leadership theory attempts to explain distinctive styles used by effective leaders through the nature of their work. The author traces the evolution of the community college leader and discusses the unique challenges faced by contemporary college presidents (e.g., relevance in a global economy, distance education). Previous leadership trait and behavior studies are analyzed for their relevance to community college leaders. The document includes tables of prominent leadership theorists along with the essential traits and behaviors gleaned from their research findings. The author concludes, however, that it is not possible for any community college president to acquire all of the traits and display all of the behaviors listed in this report. Instead, leaders will need to draw upon diverse resources (e.g., their staff, continuous training) to meet the leadership challenges of the 21st century. (Contains 17 references.) (RC)

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Running head: A STUDY IN LEADERSHIP TRAIT AND BEHAVIORAL THEORY

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What Do We Know About Good Community College Leaders: A Study in Leadership Trait Theory and Behavioral Leadership Theory

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What Do We Know About Good Community College Leaders: A Study in Leadership Trait Theory and Behavioral Leadership Theory

Introduction

To understand colleges and universities as organizations, one must also study the effects of leadership within the structure. Organizational leadership is an extremely important element of the educational institution. Much has been written about organizational structure and the impact of the leader on the organization. Birnbaum (1988) provides five basic theories to studying organizational leadership. The five leadership theories the author presented are: trait theory, power and influence theory, behavioral theory, symbolic and cultural theory, and contingency theory. This paper will present the leadership trait theory and the behavioral leadership theory against the backdrop of the community college and the leadership challenges to be encountered in the 21st century.

How does one learn the art of leadership? Can it be learned? It is argued that under the trait theory of leadership, leaders can be made only if they have been born with the right traits. The behavioral leadership theory proposes that leaders are made and not born. The study, analysis, and professional discussions about leadership are key to understanding the necessary traits and behaviors needed by the community college president. Hockaday and Puycar (2000) indicate that there are more than 125 definitions of leadership. Leadership, as described in *Community College Leadership in the New Millennium*, is "simply holding the goals of the institution in one hand and the people of the institution in the other and somehow bringing these two together in a common good" (p. 3). Yukl (1989) has defined leadership as a group process that involves interaction between at least two persons in pursuit of a goal. The community college president requires the leadership skills and behaviors needed to lead people to achieve

common goals and produce success as he or she faces the new millennium challenges.

Definition of Leadership Trait and Behavior Theories

Research of leadership began with the trait theory during the early part of the 20th century and transitioned into the behavioral leadership theory during the 1950s and 1960s. Many researchers were dissatisfied with the results of the trait theory and created the behavioral leadership theory as a way to explain how leadership is practiced and what behaviors are needed to be a successful leader. Below are the definitions of the two leadership theories.

The leadership trait theory attempts to explain distinctive characteristics in leader effectiveness through the identification of a set of personal traits. It was assumed that potential leaders could be identified by observing and identifying personality traits. The individual had to have the leadership traits as part of their personality. However, the traits could be honed through practice, training, and experience. In a report to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Hockaday and Puyear (2000) provided a list of nine traits needed by the effective community college president. Those nine traits are: "vision; integrity; confidence; courage; technical knowledge; collaborators, persistence; good judgment; and the desire to lead" (pp. 3-5). The authors have suggested that the potential community college president should develop and hone these nine traits as they travel along the pathway to the presidency. Again, the trait theory argues that the individual requires leadership traits as part of his or her personality and that the traits can be polished in order to be a successful community college leader.

The behavioral leadership theory attempts to explain distinctive styles used by effective leaders through the nature of their work. Bass (1990) in defining the behavioral leadership theory has focused on two essential behavioral characteristics of a leader. Those two behavioral elements are the genuine concern for people (employee-centered) and a strong desire to complete

the task (job-centered). The employee centered leader behaviors focus on interacting with their employees in a way that encourages mutual trust, sensitivity, and rapport between leader and follower. The job-centered behaviors are focused on getting the job done with close supervision, rewards, coercion, and a bureaucratic structure. The purpose of this aspect of leader behavior is to produce the product and increase profits. Yukl (1971) describes four basic behaviors required of a leader. The directive behavior is to clarify goals and expectations and explain job procedures. The support behavior is to be concerned, supportive, listen to employees, and provide appropriate advice. The participative behavior seeks ideas and inputs to help make decisions. The achievement behavior sets high goals and seeks goal commitment from employees. It is argued that under the behavioral leadership theory, leaders can be made through study, practice, and experience. Leaders are not born.

21st Century Challenges for the Community College Leader

Community college presidents and those in the making will need to understand and be experienced in dealing with leadership hurdles. The millennium will bring new challenges along with the old. Community college presidents will need to be successful in handling these 21st century challenges to ensure the vitality and continued success of their community college. Those faculty members, deans, vice presidents, and provosts on the pathway to being a community college presidents will need to identify inherent leadership traits, gain skills and behaviors to deal with the challenges, and operate within an ever-changing environment.

Past community college presidents have had unique challenges and environments in which they had to be successful. Sullivan (2001) identified the four generations of community college leaders as: "the founding fathers, the good managers, the collaborators, and the millennium generation" (p. 559). Each generation had major responsibilities during the 100

years of development of American community college structure. The founding fathers' generation was responsible for the initial development of the new postsecondary education system in America. The good managers were responsible for the rapid growth and management of vast resources infused into the community colleges. The collaborators developed strong teams of the faculty, staff, and administrators in order to bring together scarce resources to ensure student access to higher education.

The millennium generation of community college presidents will be required to redefine the role of the community college president to meet the new challenges. They will need to be dealmakers and coalition builders within the changing environment. The 21st century challenges, as characterized by Sullivan (2001), are:

- a continuing scarcity of resources;
- changing student and staff demographics;
- a shift in emphasis from teaching to student learning and learning outcomes assessment;
- technological developments that absorb an increasing proportion of the operating budget, challenge traditional instructional methods, and require significant retraining of staff and faculty members;
- increasing regulation by external agencies and demands for shared governance from internal constituents;
- public skepticism about their ability to meet the learning needs of contemporary consumers;
- competition from private-sector providers of high-quality training;
- blurring of service boundaries as a result of distance learning and Internet use;

- reduced emphasis on degree completion and growing interest in other forms of credentialing; and
- finally, a nearly unbearable barrage of information. (pp. 559-560)

The tests of the 21st century listed above do not have proven solutions or answers. The list provides a good view into the 21st century educational environment and the possible hurdles to be encountered. The community college president must assess his or her particular situation, environment, and available resources to form an appropriate response to the challenges that Sullivan has provided. The success of the response will depend on the traits and behaviors the community college president has in dealing with the challenges.

Hockaday and Puyear (2000) also present many of the new hurdles that the community college president will encounter in the new decade. Those challenges are: "relevance in a global economy, new competition and the move toward privatization, distance education, competency-based programs, mission boundaries blurred, and new funding challenges " (pp. 6-7). The global economy requires community colleges to look beyond district boundaries and offer international programs that will ensure district competition within the global market place. Stronger competition from private colleges and universities and the use of distance education has forced community colleges to offer competitive programs and divert scarce resources to maintain relevance in the educational marketplace. With the trend toward competency-based programs demanded by employers and state governance bodies, the community college president must establish mechanisms to ensure and maintain compliance. The programs offered by the community college must meet the corporate and governmental expectations needed in the workforce. The blurring of mission boundaries and mission creep with funding issues creates a severe impact on the college's ability to meet expectations. Additional missions with fewer

funding resources create a constant struggle for the community college president to resolve.

Cohen and Brawer (1996) also present insight into the hurdles to be faced by the community college president, offering a general list of the trends, challenges, and obligations. The authors indicate that new community college presidents must have a basic understanding of the economy, demographics, and public attitudes toward education. The economy should supply sufficient resources for educational opportunities to educate the youth of America and continue lifelong learning for its citizens. According to Cohen and Brawer, the demographics of the community college students will continue to support the need for career, collegiate, developmental, and continuing education opportunities. Public attitudes toward education will be based on colleges providing a route for personal advancement. If the colleges fail to convince the public that education provides upward mobility, then other funding priorities may displace education. The community colleges must continue to serve as the feeder to universities, and offer programs such as remedial education, developmental programs, workforce programs, and continuing education to maintain public support. The authors did not project a major change in the economy, demographics, or public attitudes toward education. Cohen and Brawer indicate that state financing will provide the bulk of funding support for community colleges in the near future.

In today's world of a potential recession with reductions to the tax base, public financing of educational services provided by the community colleges may be diminished. Reduced funding could affect the college's ability to provide remedial education, developmental programs, workforce programs, and continuing education. The lack of educational services and support to meet the needs of the community could severely affect public attitudes toward higher education. Community colleges will need to develop alternative funding sources through

foundations, donations, and grants to maintain current educational programs and to expand services.

Other impacts offered by Cohen and Brawer (1996) include a slow growth in student admissions, slow growth in faculty, changes in governance, financing, instruction and curriculum, and a need to adjust organizational structures. Community college growth will occur in both eighteen-year-olds and mature adults seeking education as a way to improve their quality of life. The community colleges will also need to accommodate a growth in minority students. A large need for faculty replacements will occur in the early part of the millennium due to retirements. However, the growth in the actual numbers will correspond to the student growth. Changes in governance will continue to be made with the desire to ensure state and local governance agencies can influence quality of instruction and accountability of community college performance. The authors also indicate instruction and curriculum will remain oriented on collegiate and general education programs that transfer to the university with a growth in workforce and technical programs. Career education, developmental education, community education, collegiate, and general education will still be the focus of the community college curriculum in the near term. Electronic methods of instruction, such as multimedia, interactive media, and distance learning will continue to supplement classroom-centered instruction, not replace it. Cohen and Brawer have presented an accurate view of the educational environment community colleges will encounter in the new century.

Organizational restructuring is also a real or perceived need by the new community college president to meet his or her leadership and management requirements. The organizational structure tends to be re-crafted when a new community college president arrives in the position. Underwood and Hammons (1999) contend that the incoming community college

president will have to manage organizational changes within the community college. The author's research indicates that the leadership style of the new president will require a restructuring of the college organization to meet his or her requirements. The data presented by Underwood and Hammons indicates 71 percent of incoming community college presidents made organizational adjustments and changes within the first year of their presidency. There are constant changes and readjustments to the organization approximately every 24 months. The authors also indicate that 84 percent of the nation's 1,100 plus community colleges reviews the organizational structure annually, with 77 percent making changes to the structure every 24 months. This constant changing of the community college organizational structure is a major challenge for the community college president and the college itself.

The community college itself can pose challenges that can be overwhelming for a new president. According to Alfred and Rosevear (2000), the community colleges are "slow-moving, change-resistant organizations with static organizational structures and systems-driven management" (p. 2). The static organizational structure portion of this quote contradicts the data presented by Underwood and Hammons (1999). The organizational structures of community colleges tend to be in constant transition and change. However, slow-moving and resistant to change is alive and well in community colleges according to the authors. Alfred and Rosevear indicate "institutions cannot get to the long term in one jump. The goal should be to understand what relatively small things they have to do this year that will have enormous implications for the future" (p. 27).

I would offer that the community college cannot make rapid changes due to the collective resistance to change and the "collegial" structure. The internal inertia requires unique strategies to counteract. The community college president must develop and implement unique strategies

to ensure goal accomplishment. The internal operation of the community college indicates that it starts slow, continues at a slow pace, and cannot be stopped, or change direction very quickly. Alfred and Rosevear (2000) indicate that patience and persistence are needed traits of the community college president to overcome resistance to change. The community college is like the tortoise, not the hare. This resistance to change, I suspect, is prevalent in all higher education institutions.

Leadership Traits Needed by the Community College President

There is no common agreement on the leadership traits and skills needed to be a community college president. Kouzes and Posner (1991) in their study of 1,500 American managers identified over 250 different traits that were admired by their subordinates. The authors stated: "According to our research, the majority of us admire leaders who are: honest, competent, forward-looking and inspiring" (p. 16). Though much research has been conducted as to the required leadership traits for a community college president, there appears to be limited consensus. Leadership research has presented traits, habits, hints, types, and change agents needed by the community college president. The fog of the research on what traits and skills are required by the community college president has made the pathway to the presidency multiple-choice. As one travels the path to the presidency, numerous skills and traits will need to be developed. Many authors have conducted research to identify leadership traits and skills required to be a successful community college president. What follows is an examination of some of the research available on traits and skills needed by community college leaders.

According to Alfred and Rosevear's (2000) theoretical framework, several leadership traits and skills to be developed by community college leaders are "teamwork, information sharing, core competency focus, customer service emphasis, and market foresight" (pp. 3-7).

Alfred and Rosevear also indicated that these traits should be developed as the community college leader moves through the academic structure of faculty, department chair, dean, vice president, and provost. By the time the individual reaches the presidency, the seven traits must be sufficiently developed to provide a firm base upon which to lead.

Covey (1989) describes seven habits of highly effective people that can be important for a community college president. The seven traits are: "be proactive, begin with an end in mind, put first things first, think win-win; seek first to understand, then to be understood; synergize, and sharpen the saw" (p. inside cover). Most community college presidents should want to be highly effective leaders and should implement and practice the seven habits. Mr. Covey's list of habits is also different from the two previous research findings.

When Garmon (2001) accepted the presidency of a community college, many well-wishers offered 66 helpful hints that would help him lead his college. The list of suggestions included advice on practicing humility, picking your battles, instilling a sense of pride, and trusting your intuition. Garmon summarized the 66 helpful suggestions into the following statement:

> What matters most is open, honest, accurate communication, with a good dose of common sense, lots of willingness to trust and constant dedication to the success of students and those who serve students. Above all, the community college is a learning-centered organization. This means that its success has to be the primary business of everyone involved in giving strength to the college community and to supporting faculty and staff. (p. 10)

The focus of 66 helpful hints was on actions to be taken by the community college president while executing the authority of the office. The summation provided by Garmon provided

additional community college leadership traits for consideration.

The literature on community college leadership presents additional traits needed by women community college presidents. Three prominent women leaders provided comments based on experiences acquired as a community college president. Evans (2001) argues that women leaders are "not so bound by tradition nor enamored with power and the trappings of office; they are outcome-oriented and very caring. They are "can do" people, who take on challenges others shun" (p. 181). Giannini (2001) sees women community college leaders as responsive change agents guiding the future agendas of higher education. Stephenson (2001) challenges woman leaders to understand staffing, students, funding and the workforce.

The list of leadership traits needed by a community college president continues to grow as additional trait research is conducted. Even the trait research data provided in this chapter creates a fog as to what are leadership traits and what are leadership behaviors. The confusion surrounding this information makes it difficult to separate the two. Hockaday and Puyear (2000), as stated above, have provided the most cohesive research on leadership traits required by a community college president.

Leadership Behaviors Needed by the Community College President

Ohio State University (OSU) was the leading proponent for the study of leadership behaviors. According to Bass (1990), the OSU behavioral leadership theory research conducted during the 1950's and 60's focused on the observed behaviors of consideration and initiating structures. Consideration behaviors would endear trust, respect, and sensitivity for subordinates. Initiating structure behaviors would be to work people hard through a series of rigid schedules, be dictatorial in manner toward subordinates , and put the task ahead of the subordinates. What are the leadership behaviors needed by a community college president? Several authors

have provided research data to illustrate some of the behaviors required of successful community college presidents. What follows is an examination of some of the research available on leadership behaviors needed by community college leaders.

In a meta-ethnographic study by Pielstick (1998), seven major community college leadership behaviors were provided. The seven leadership behaviors are: "creating a vision, communicating the vision, building relationships, developing a supporting organizational culture, guiding implementation, exhibiting character, and achieving results" (p. 15). The author also pointed out that the leader had to create and sustain a supportive culture of understanding and confidence within the community college to overcome obstacles. This data would support the OSU defined consideration behavior.

Oakley and Krug (1994) presented two extreme types of leader behaviors, the reactive, and the creative leader. The reactive leader makes all decisions personally, pushes the organization for results, is highly opinionated, and afraid of losing control. The reactive leader is oriented toward the problem and symptoms instead of discovering the cause of the problem. The reactive leader is an example of an initiating structure behavior. The creative leader empowers people to make decisions, pulls the organization toward a vision, is open-minded, and relaxes control to obtain results. The creative leader is oriented on solutions that nurture ownership by the team members. The creative leader is an example of consideration behavior.

McFarlin, Crittenden, and Ebbers (1999) listed nine behaviors and factors that community college presidents possess based on a survey conducted in 1998. The survey instrument was mailed to 975 presidents of public two-year colleges with 718 returned responses. The results of the survey provided nine common behaviors and factors of a community college president. The common behaviors are: "possession of an earned doctorate

degree, specific study of community college leadership, personal research and publication agenda, preparation as a change agent, status as community college insider, mentor-protégé relationship, peer networks, leadership development activities, and knowledge of technology" (p. 20). This data tends to emphasis consideration behaviors with a mix of leadership traits.

Phelps, Taber, and Smith's (1997) research on the African-American community college president presents additional insight to the leadership behaviors of the minority leader. The authors' state:

> Presidents of a minority racial, ethnic, or gender group may also provide inspiring role models for students, employees, and community residents; add important voices to dialogues concerning personnel issues, including staff development, curriculum changes, teaching excellence, and student success; and promote community relationships and commitments, enriching all associated with the college and its community. (p. 3)

The Phelps, Taber, and Smith's research data provides support for the OSU research focused on consideration behaviors.

The OSU data, as provided by Shields and Gardner (1997), indicates that subordinates were more satisfied with a leader who displayed genuine consideration behavior. The data on leaders with initiating structure behavior were viewed with mixed results. Some subordinates respected the task accomplishment emphasized by the leader, but, over time began to resent the leader and wanted to transfer away from the leader who acted in an initiating structure manner.

Conclusion

The leadership challenges provided by the many authors offer an excellent insight to the community college leadership environment for the 21st century. The ability to deal with many new and varied challenges requires an agile leader who is thoroughly prepared through training,

experience, and self-study. The movement through the community college hierarchy from faculty to president may provide the necessary opportunities to develop and refine leadership traits and behaviors to deal with the new millennium challenges. The future leader must make every effort to learn from their experiences and those of others in order to develop and refine needed leadership behaviors and traits. Leadership training, within higher education, needs more focus and emphasis to prepare future leaders. With the impending turnover of community college leaders due to retirements, leadership training is more important now than it has been in the past. Formal and informal training programs should be in place now to assist leadership development of those individuals just starting up the ladder to the community college presidency.

The United States military for centuries has provided extensive and continuous leadership training through formal training and education, on the job training, and coaching and mentoring. During a career in the military, a leader will spend at least three years in formal education learning and practicing leadership skills and behaviors. The community college president must assess his or her particular situation, environment, and available resources to form an appropriate response to the challenges. The ability of the community college leaders to understand the many new challenges, formulate strategies for dealing with the challenges, communicating the strategies, and succeeding in overcoming the challenges, will enhance the institution they lead. To direct a community college that meets all stakeholders' requirements within the current environment will be the measure of success for the community college president.

The literature in community college leadership has provided many traits needed by the community college president as shown in Table 1, and behaviors listed in Table 2. The list of traits and behaviors provided is not comprehensive, but, is diverse. The gaining and refining the required leadership traits and behaviors is accomplished by the matriculation through various

leadership positions within the community college. Can a community college president have all the traits and behaviors that the research has provided? Will having all the traits and behaviors ensure success as a community college president?

The answer to these questions is no, and cannot be found in the literature. It is found within community college presidents as they conduct self-assessments of their leadership traits and behaviors. It is not possible for any community college president to have all of the behaviors and traits that I have outlined in this paper, and there are even more listed in the study of leadership that I did not present. Community college leaders must capitalize on those behaviors and traits that make them effective in creating a high performance educational institution. The traits and behaviors that the leader assesses as weak or needs further development must be improved through training, study, and mentoring. The leader may also compensate with highly developed traits and behaviors to offset those that are not well developed. If the leader does take this strategy, then he or she must have sufficient understanding of how to compensate and still meet performance expectations. The leader may also consider using a trusted staff to complement his leadership behaviors and skills in needed areas. I would argue that the community college leader should play to their strengths and offset the shortfalls through continued leadership study and training, and have a trusted staff to assist in those areas the leader deems needing support. Success as a community college president is not measured by traits or behaviors. It is measured by how one applies the traits and behaviors to the task. Success is also measured by the many stakeholders of the community college that evaluate the leader's performance. The final review of success is conducted by the governance board that does the hiring and firing.

Bolman and Deal (1997) describes leadership as an intangible thing. "It exists only in

relationships and in the imagination and perception of the engaged parties. We expect leaders to persuade or inspire rather than coerce or give orders" (p. 294). The authors present a coherent argument that good leaders have the "right stuff". They have qualities like vision, strength, and commitment. They also propose that good leadership is situational and that leadership solutions in one scenario are not effective in another. Bolman and Deal offer that a good leader has a good mix of high quality traits and acceptable leadership behaviors. The authors state that:

> Leadership is thus a subtle process of mutual influence fusing thought, feeling, and action to produce cooperative effort in the service of purposes and values of both the leader and the led. (p. 296)

Bolman and Deal also indicated that there is no one set of universal traits that will make a leader, nor are there certain behaviors that make a good leader.

The challenges that the 21st century community college president will encounter will require unique behaviors and traits. The list of traits and behaviors needed by a community college president is quite extensive. It begs the question of how one individual can obtain and master all the traits and behaviors provided in the literature. What if a community college president has all the behaviors, will he or she be a successful community college president? What if the president only has 75 % or 50 % of the listed traits? Can success as a community college president be measured by the leadership traits one possesses? Certainly, one must develop and refine leadership traits and behaviors as he or she transitions from faculty to president. Few community college presidents, if any, have every leadership trait and behavior presented in this paper. The skill in applying the leadership traits and behaviors one possesses is the yardstick to measure success as a community college president. Applying leadership traits and behaviors to the task is truly an art, not a science.

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Table 1

List of Leadership Traits by Authors

Authors	Traits
Alfred and Rosevear (2000)	Teamwork, Information Sharing, Core Competency Focus, Customer Service Emphasis, and Market Foresight.
Bolman and Deal (1997)	Vision, Strength, and Commitment
Covey (1989)	Be Proactive, Begin with an End in Mind, Put First Things First, Think Win-Win, Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood, Synergize, and Sharpen the Saw.
Evans (2001)	Women Leaders Are: Not So Bound by Tradition, Nor Enamored with Power and the Trappings of Office; Outcome-Oriented, Very Caring, Can Do People, Take on Challenges Others Shun
Garmon (2001)	Practicing Humility, Picking Your Battles, Instilling a Sense of Pride, Trusting Your Intuition, Open, Honest, Accurate Communication, Good Dose Of Common Sense, Lots of Willingness to Trust, Constant Dedication to the Success of Students and Those Who Serve Students.
Giannini (2001)	Sees Women Leaders as Responsive Change Agents, and Guiding the Future Agendas of Higher Education.
Hockaday and Puyear (2000)	Vision; Integrity; Confidence; Courage; Technical Knowledge; Collaborators, Persistence; Good Judgment; and Desire To Lead.
Kouzes and Posner (1991)	Honest, Competent, Forward-Looking, and Inspiring
Stephenson (2001)	Challenges Woman Leaders To Understand Staffing, Students, Funding And The Workforce

Table 2

List of Leadership Behaviors by Authors

Authors	Behaviors
Bolman and Deal (1997)	Persuade, Inspire rather than Coerce or Give Orders, Mutual Influence Fusing Thought, Feeling, and Action to Produce Cooperative Effort in the Service of Purposes and Values of Both the Leader and the Led
McFarlin, Crittenden, and Ebbers (1999)	Possession of an Earned Doctorate Degree, Specific Study of Community College Leadership, Personal Research and Publication Agenda, Preparation as a Change Agent, Status as Community College Insider, Mentor-Protégé Relationship, Peer Networks, Leadership Development Activities, and Technology Knowledge
Phelps, Taber, and Smith (1997)	Provide Inspiring Role Models for Students, Employees, and Community Residents; Important Voices to Dialogues Concerning Staff Development, Curriculum Changes, Teaching Excellence, and Student Success; Promote Community Relationships and Commitments, Enriching all Associated with the College and Its Community
Pielstick (1998)	Creating a Vision, Communicating the Vision, Building Relationships, Developing a Supporting Organizational Culture, Guiding Implementation, Exhibiting Character, and Achieving Results
Oakley and Krug (1994)	The reactive leader - oriented toward the problem and symptoms instead of discovering the cause of the problem. The creative leader - oriented on solutions that nurture ownership by the team members.

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